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# O L Y M P I A

## A S I T W A S A N D A S I T I S.

(Continued from page 71.)



Fig. 1.—AGONOTHETE CROWNING AN ATHLETE.

From a Vase in the Collection of the  
Duc de Luynes.

ALTHOUGH the unbroken series of Olympic festivals is said to have begun with Iphitos, their real history commences a century after his time, when Koroibos of Elis carried off the prize in the foot-race, B. C. 776, and the Pentatheris was taken as a chronological measure. From this date, the first Olympiad, the names of victorious athletes were regularly recorded. In the sixth Olympiad, the oracle at Delphi was consulted as to the reward which should be given to them, and the crown of wild olive which it had decreed was bestowed, in the seventh, upon Daikles of Messene, the winner of the foot-race. Running in the single or the double course was the only permitted contest, so long as the festival lasted a single day, but in the seventy-seventh Olympiad, when it was extended to five days, including the introductory and closing sacrifices, pro-

cessions and banquets, the games were multiplied in kind, and their number was gradually increased to twenty-five, of which seventeen were contested by grown men, six by boys, and two by heralds and trumpeters.

During the first Olympiads, the athletes in the foot-race ran but once round the stadium, the distance being the eighth part of a mile. Later they ran twice (the diaulos), and later still as many as twelve times (the dolichos). In the fifteenth Olympiad, leaping, quoit-playing, javelin-throwing, and wrestling were introduced, and the five formed the pentathlon, in which two Lacedæmonians named Lampis and Eurybates were the first victors. Boxing in the ring, and chariot-racing with a team of four stallions of a heavy breed, were severally introduced in the twenty-third and twenty-fifth Olympiads, and horse-racing, with boxing and wrestling contests between athletes, known as pancratiasts, were added to these in the thirty-third. At succeeding solemnities boys were allowed to contend in racing, wrestling, boxing, and the pentathlon, but this latter contest was put a stop to in the thirty-eighth Olympiad by the Eleians, who were jealous of the victory gained in it by a Lacedæmonian boy named Eutelidas. Other games, which were only entered into by grown men, were combats with weapons; the ἀπῆν, or mule-harnessed chariot-race; the κάλπη, or race between ridden horses, in the last round of which the riders jumped from their horses and ran with them, holding their bridles; races between stallions in pairs, colts harnessed to cars as well as ridden, and contests between heralds and trumpeters.<sup>1</sup>

The variety of the spectacle kept up the interest of the thousands who witnessed it, and this, considering all that they had to endure, must have been of no common degree. Hour after

<sup>1</sup> The most renowned victors at Olympia appeared between Ol. 60–90, B. C. 540–416. Among them were Milo of Krotona, Isomachos, Tisikrates, Astylos, and Phrylllos.



Fig. 2.—JUDGES OF THE GAMES. (ETRUSCAN.)

Bas-relief on a Cippus found at Chiusi.

ing, and cramming themselves with food,<sup>4</sup> *usque ad nauseam*. They became extremely voracious and proportionately strong. Making every allowance for exaggeration in the statements of Pausanias, as to the wonderful strength of such famous athletes as Polydamas and Milo of Krotona, who could carry an ox, and stop a chariot and horses when at full speed by grasping the vehicle from behind with one hand, there can be no doubt that these men had muscles and sinews of iron. The belief that their strength far exceeded that of men of the present day seems to be substantiated by the late discovery at Olympia of a huge loaf-shaped stone, so heavy that the strongest workman could hardly lift it with both hands, which, as we learn from the inscription upon it, was hurled by a certain Bybon with his left hand backwards over his head beyond a mark.<sup>5</sup> Evidently the training which produced such men had been raised to the dignity of a fine art, but we cannot wonder at its perfection in a country where gymnastic exercises were daily practised in the public gymnasias of every little town.

While some of the athletes underwent their preparatory ten months' training in the gymnasium at Olympia, where there was a running course and palaestra provided for them outside the Altis, others took it in the gymnasias of their native cities. In either case, when the time appointed for the celebration of the games approached, they were obliged to appear before the Hellanodikai, or judges, (Fig. 2,) who had the charge of everything connected with the games, and to swear before the statue of Zeus Horkios that they had submitted to the required discipline, at Olympia or elsewhere. This statue, which represented the god with a thunderbolt in either hand, stood in the Bouleuterion, or Council Hall. A bronze tablet upon its base bore an inscription warning all persons of the terrible consequences which would follow upon the violation of oaths taken before it. Here the athlete, stretching out his right hand over the smoking entrails of a wild boar, swore that he was guiltless of murder, impiety, or dishonesty, and pledged himself to take no unfair advantage of his antagonist, or to accept or offer bribes which should affect the issue of the contests in which he might be engaged. Despite these solemn promises, instances of perjury were occasionally detected. In such cases the offenders were heavily fined, and the money thus accumulated was spent upon bronze statues of Zeus, called Zanes,<sup>6</sup> which were erected upon an estrade of stone near the so-called Treasure-Houses. An inscription upon the base of each statue handed down the name of the criminal, of his parents, and of his native city to eternal ignominy.

The severity with which perjury was thus punished shows us that, although the Greek nature cannot be altogether exonerated from the charge of untruthfulness and treachery sometimes

<sup>1</sup> This was one of the panegyric laws. Krause, *Hellenika*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> The festival was held in the Hekatombaia of the Attic calendar.

<sup>3</sup> Jo. Chrys. *Orat.* II. p. 331; and Aristot. *Problem.* XXXVIII. 6.

<sup>4</sup> In early times this consisted of dried figs and cheese, for which light diet Orobasios or Pythagoras substituted meat.

<sup>5</sup> I. Schubring, letter to the *Athenaeum* of Aug. 2d, 1879.

<sup>6</sup> Sixteen bases of such statues have lately been found at Olympia in the place mentioned by Pausanias. See Adler's letter to the *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, No. 63.

hour they sat with uncovered heads<sup>1</sup> beneath the fierce rays of a midsummer sun,<sup>2</sup> amid stifling clouds of dust raised by the trampling feet of men and horses, while the athletes struggled or stood in the arena as in a furnace.<sup>3</sup> The combatants suffered all the more on account of their full, firm, fleshy habit of body, induced by the peculiar regimen which they were obliged to observe for ten months previous to the opening of the festival. During this time they passed their lives in exercising, sleep-

brought against it, these practices were recognized by the national conscience as base and unworthy, and this especially in matters which concerned the gods, and affected those relations between man and man where honesty and fairness were imperatively necessary, both in those who contended for a prize, and in the judges who were to award it.

Like the athletes, the judges of the games swore before the statue of Zeus Horkios that they would not accept bribes, that they would give just judgment in all cases submitted to them, and would not reveal the reasons which should determine their distribution of prizes. The number of these judges varied at different periods from two to ten, and even twelve. They held daily sessions for the ten months preceding the celebration of the games, in a hall on the southern side of a building called the Hellanodikeion, which stood near the market-place at Elis. All that concerned the ordering of the festivals was submitted to them; and when these were in progress they sat in purple robes at the upper end of the arena, near the goal, where they could best observe the course of events. The crowns which they distributed on the last day of the festival<sup>1</sup> to those whom they then recognized as victorious, came from the sacred tree (*ελαία καλλιστέφανος*), planted by Herakles, which grew in the Altis, near an altar dedicated to the nymphs. The twigs of which they were composed were cut from the tree with a golden knife, by a boy both of whose parents were still living, and when woven into crowns were laid upon a table of ivory and gold made by Kolotes, the pupil of Pasiteles.<sup>2</sup> Each winner in the games, with a woollen fillet bound about his head, sat upon a bronze tripod in sight of the assembled multitude, whose deafening shouts rang through the air as

“The Ætolian arbiter with sentence fair  
Garlanded with olive gray the victor’s hair.”<sup>3</sup> (Fig. I.)

A palm was then placed in his hand, and every ear was strained to catch the voice of the heralds which proclaimed the names of the triumphant athlete, of his father, and of his birth-place. From Olympia to that rejoicing city, which claimed him as a son, the victor’s path was a *via triumphalis*, and when he drew near home crowds flocked out to offer him their congratulations, to shower garlands upon him, and to escort him into the city, not by the gate, like an ordinary mortal, but through a breach made in the walls, like a conqueror. Then followed the ceremony of thanking the tutelar deities, and the recitation of an ode, in which the athlete’s exploits were duly commemorated. Sometimes, as in the case of Dioxippos of Athens, related by Ælian,<sup>4</sup> the strong man met a mightier than himself among the watchers of his triumph,—“a lady of surpassing beauty, such beauty that the haughty hero starts, flushes, and again grows pale, turns to look, and remains transfixed, forgetful of himself, of the crowd, of everything but his charmer. The spectators exchange meaning glances, and the old cynic Diogenes of Sinope growls out a jest at the expense of your mighty athlete, who has met his match in a chit of a girl.” The after history of Dioxippos,<sup>5</sup> who lived in the days of Alexander, is in sad contrast with this brilliant episode of his career. Challenged to single combat by a Macedonian bully named Korrhagos, who came in armor, like Mars, to meet him, Dioxippos bore the brunt of the attack upon his naked body, and, seizing the weapons directed against it, turned them upon his foe and overthrew him, but by this victory over the *protégé* of Alexander he incurred the displeasure of the monarch, who was easily induced to believe that the offending athlete had sought to poison him at a banquet. Unable to clear himself from this false accusation, Dioxippos, after writing a letter which proved his innocence, committed suicide,<sup>6</sup> and left the king a prey to unavailing remorse. Pausanias does not mention Dioxippos among the many Olympic

<sup>1</sup> Petersen (*Kunst des Pheidias*, p. 43) gives evidence to show that the crowns were distributed at the close of each contest; but if Adler is correct in stating that they were given in the Temple of Zeus (*Deutsche Bauzeitung*, Oct. 4, 1879), this is impossible.

<sup>2</sup> Before Kolotes made his chryselephantine table, a copper-covered tripod had been used.

<sup>3</sup> Pindar, *Ol.* III. 6, Rev. F. D. Morice’s translation.

<sup>4</sup> *Var. Hist.*, XII. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Diod. Sic., Lib. XVII. c. 100.

<sup>6</sup> In the third year of the 113th Olympiad. Krause, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

victors who were honored with an iconic statue, but Pliny<sup>1</sup> says that his portrait was painted by Alkimachos.

The custom of erecting marble or bronze statues of the Olympionikai in the Altis was introduced in the fifty-second Olympiad, and kept up until a late period, so that the number eventually accumulated there was prodigious. These statues, with the names of the athletes and fitting inscriptions upon their bases, peopled the sacred enclosure, and with the chariots and charioteers and horses of bronze, columns of victory, and altars of every description, formed a spectacle such as the world has never seen elsewhere, and will assuredly never see again.

The Olympic games differed in one important respect from the Pythian, the Nemean, and the Isthmian, that while in these musical and poetical contests were permitted, at Olympia equestrian and gymnastic competitions only were allowed. Exception was made in favor of Nero, who desired to obtain public recognition of his ability as a musician, but in no other case were the votaries of Apollo allowed to enter the lists. Recitations in prose and verse and extempore speeches took place during the progress of the Olympic games, in the so-called Lalichneion of the Gymnasium. There Herodotus read extracts from his great history, and so impressed his hearers that they demanded that each of its nine books should bear the name of a Muse. Among his audience sat the youthful Thucydides, who was then inspired with the conception of his own yet greater work. Other recorded readers were Gorgias the Sophist, Hippias, Prodikos, Lysias, and Dio Chrysostom. All these and many other distinguished men took part, either as actors or spectators, in the initiatory and thank offerings, the festal processions, the agonistic exercises, and the banquets, which formed the *ensemble* of the Olympic festival.

The order in which the various offerings were made is not certainly known, but in all probability the first was to Hestia, the second to Zeus, the third to Kronos and Rhea, the fourth to Zeus and Poseidon, the fifth to Artemis, and the sixth to Athene Ergane. Besides these, special offerings were made to Pelops and Herakles, the mythic founders of the games. The first day of the festival opened with the offering made by the heralds, after which the judges and athletes took the prescribed oath in the Bouleuterion before the statue of Zeus Horkios. Either before or after this ceremony, the athletes drew lots for their antagonists. A number of little silver balls marked with letters were thrown into an urn, and those who drew the same letters paired. If any one drew an odd letter he took as his antagonist the last athlete on the list of those who had paired, and thus had the advantage of contending with an opponent who had already gone through the fatigue of one contest. On the morning of each day the athletes who were to take part in the exercises were separated into companies of four, and placed in small chambers under the grand stand, or *άφεσις*, of the hippodrome, ready to be loosed when the moment came for them to appear in the arena. The apthesis, or stand, the master work of Kolotes, four hundred feet in length, was shaped like the prow of a ship, and turned towards the race-course. A bronze dolphin and an altar, on which rested an eagle with outspread wings, stood at its extreme end; and these were so managed by machinery, that, as each race was concluded, the fish fell to the ground, and the bird rose high enough in the air to be seen by all the spectators.

During the first and second days, boys contended in running, leaping, disc and javelin throwing, and wrestling. On the third, the great day, full-grown athletes ran in the single and double course, wrestled, boxed, and fought with weapons. On the fourth day, they contended in the pentathlon, after which came horse and chariot races. The race between ridden horses was succeeded by the Quadriga, or four-horse, and the Biga, or two-horse, chariot-race; and these by races between chariots drawn by stallions, mares, colts, or mules, and between colts ridden eight times round the stadion. Sometimes, though rarely, women appeared as charioteers in the arena. The first who raced and won was Kyniska, daughter of Archidamos, king of Sparta; and, wonderful to relate, the inscription which records her victory has lately been found at

<sup>1</sup> *Nat. Hist.*, XXXV. 40. 32.

Olympia.<sup>1</sup> Although permitted to keep race-horses at Olympia, women were not allowed to witness the gymnastic exercises, with the single exception of the priestess of Demeter Chamyne, who sat in the stadion on a white marble altar placed opposite the seats of the judges. The ceremonies of the fifth day began with the procession of the Theoroi, or deputies from the Hellenic states. Attired in splendid robes, with crowns of embroidered fillets upon their heads, they rode in rich chariots to witness the hecatomb, or great offering of a hundred oxen made by the state of Elis to the Olympian Zeus upon his altar, which stood between the three temples of Zeus, Hera, and Rhea. This altar, which consisted of the ashes of the thighs of oxen offered to the god at each succeeding feast, was raised upon a stone base (*prothysis*) beneath which the victims were put to death.

After the conclusion of the hecatomb, sacrifices were offered at various altars, and these, with processions and entertainments of all kinds, filled up the time until evening, when a magnificent banquet was offered to the victorious athletes by the state of Elis. Kings, princes, and other distinguished persons, were also entertained at feasts, some of which were of the most splendid description; such as that of Alkibiades, who, when Athens had for ten Olympiads been excluded from participation in the ceremonies, sought by a lavish expenditure to silence the rumor that his native city was impoverished; and that of Alexander the Great, who received his guests in a splendid tent, which contained one hundred couches. His predecessor upon the throne of Macedonia, Alexander I., was the first member of that royal house who offered himself as a candidate for the foot-race, but he was refused permission to run until he had proved that he was an Argive, and not a barbarian.<sup>2</sup> The right to enter the lists, so jealously confined to native Greeks, was afterwards extended to all Greek colonists. Thus, after Alexandria had become a seat of Hellenic culture, her citizens were admitted with the same rights as the Greeks, and these rights were also conceded to Asiatic and African colonists. Rome assumed them when she subjugated Greece, and sent senatorial and imperial representatives to contend at Olympia.<sup>3</sup> She also introduced Greek athletes into the Roman arena,<sup>4</sup> who were specially distinguished by the name of Hieronikai. Greek games at Rome, or at Olympia by Roman sufferance, were, however, very different in their moral aspect from those which had been held there in the days when Greece was her own mistress, and a believer in the gods whom she honored with more than outward show. In these days of her humiliation she had lost both her independence and her faith. The chilling influence of an unsympathetic spirit weighed upon great gatherings such as these which Rome tolerated, though averse to their continuance because they tended to keep patriotic feelings alive in the breasts of those whom she had brought under her yoke. All things thus conspired to lessen the splendor of the Olympic games during the last three centuries of their existence. In vain did Trajan and Hadrian grant new privileges to Greek athletes, and Julian the Apostate celebrate games at Olympia with unusual pomp and circumstance, with the hope of infusing new life into an institution which was too Greek to live when Greece herself was dead. They lingered on until, in the year of our Lord 394, the Emperor Theodosius closed them by an imperial edict, and the last recorded victor, Dionysios of Alexandria (Ol. 262), like the first, Koroibos of Elis, won in the foot-race.

In the year 395 the Goths, with Alaric at their head, invaded the Morea, plundered the temple, and melted down the bronze statues which Christian iconoclasts had spared, and fourteen years later (A. D. 410) in the reign of the second Theodosius, the great temple of Zeus was partially destroyed by marauders, after which we know nothing of its history. The German

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the *Athenaeum* of Aug. 2, 1879, from Dr. I. Schubring. A bronze quadriga, with the effigy of this princess, is mentioned by Pausanias among those which stood in the pronaos of the temple of Zeus.

<sup>2</sup> Herod. V. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Tiberius took part in the chariot-race, Ol. 199, as did Nero in Ol. 211. Nero also carried off a prize in the musical contest, which was then allowed for the first and last time. The same Emperor contended in the Pythian and Nemean games. On his return to Rome he displayed 1108 crowns, won during his travels, about the base of the obelisk in the Circus Maximus.

<sup>4</sup> This was done by Sylla, in the 175th Olympiad.

archæologists, who have extended their observations outside the Altis to the surrounding buildings, have formed the following plausible theory about the destruction of the edifices at Olympia, in which they distinguish four periods. "Not long after the last celebration of the Olympic games," says Dörpfeld,<sup>1</sup> "and probably in consequence of the sudden and complete cutting down of the trees, great masses of earth fell from the Kronian hill, and shattered the Heraion, some of the Treasure-Houses, and the Stadion. Shortly after, the Kladeios rose above its banks and inundated the greater part of the Palæstra. Then ensued a pause of several centuries, after which Slavs<sup>2</sup> and other Northern tribes invaded the valley of the Alpheios and settled there to cultivate vineyards. Their dwellings are the smallest and poorest huts imaginable, without any places for fire. About the end of the seventh century great and repeated inundations of the Alpheios and the Kladeios occurred, which drove away all settlers from Olympia, and buried the buildings still standing under layers of sand four metres deep. A few of the Treasure-Houses which stood on their high terraces near the Kronian hill escaped, being out of the reach of the waters, but they suffered during the Middle Ages, when many of the small blocks of which they were constructed were used as building materials for the houses of the neighboring villages. The yet remaining portions of the Treasure-Houses were finally thrown down by land-slides from the neighboring hill. Thus Olympia became a wilderness, in the midst of which the lofty ruins of the great temple of Zeus and of many Roman buildings remained standing to point out to later visitors the treasures hidden under the earth."

In this account of the forces which destroyed these stately edifices, one mighty agent, the earthquake, is forgotten. Its power alone, as it would seem, could have sufficed to hurl some of the marbles of the great temple to the distances from their original positions at which they have been found. The inundations mentioned were doubtless caused by the gradual closing of the natural outlet of the river Alpheios and its tributary, and the result was the generation of malaria so deadly that no human being could long remain within the circuit of its influence. A long period of stillness, unbroken by the presence of man, then brooded over the plain, during which the fever god ruled supreme. At last, in the year 1766, an English traveller, Chandler, looking down upon it from Miraka, a poor village built on the neighboring hills, saw the ruins rising like tomb-stones out of the verdant plain which concealed so much that the ancients had prized, and returned to give news to the modern world of that Olympia whose existence had been clean forgotten for upwards of a thousand years.

CHARLES C. PERKINS.

<sup>1</sup> *Berichte aus Olympia*, No. 31, von Wilhelm Dörpfeld, in the January No., 1879, of the *Archäologische Zeitung*.

<sup>2</sup> The so-called Slavic remains, says Adler in the text to the third volume of the *Ausgrabungen* (Berlin, 1879), are in fact those of poor settlers upon the soil.

(To be continued.)

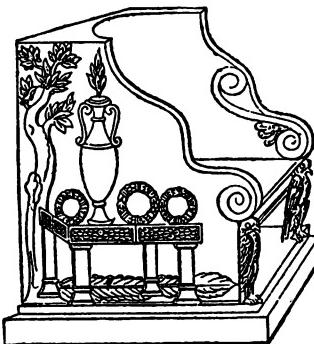


Fig. 3.—MARBLE SEAT OF AN AGONOTHETE, FOUND AT ATHENS.